

# California Department of Veterans Affairs



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CAL-VET LOANS – VETERANS HOMES – VETERANS SERVICES – WOMEN VETERANS  
VETERANS MEMORIAL – VETS LICENSE PLATES

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REVAMPS VETERANS HOMES DIVISION**

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### **CHANGES PROVIDE NEW DIRECTION IN HEALTH CARE TREATMENT**

**SACRAMENTO, CA** – January 30, 2003 – Today, Secretary K. Maurice Johannessen announced several changes within the Veterans Home Division of The California Department of Veterans Affairs. “The changes being implemented will address problems that have been ailing the Veterans Homes Division for some time,” commented the Secretary. “The entire Division has been under close scrutiny for several months, and I believe these operational changes will be for the better, providing the best possible healthcare for California’s veterans,” he added.

Some of the changes to occur will be the placement of a new Deputy Secretary of the Homes Division who oversees all three Veterans Homes, administration changes at the three Homes, and the hiring of licensed nursing administrators with strong nursing home background. Also, to better meet the needs of nursing home residents, physician services will be restructured at all the Homes. In addition, there will be a much more aggressive quality management program put in place.

The review process was undertaken by a team of experts in the nursing home profession assembled by Undersecretary Tom Kraus, himself a former nursing home owner, chief operating officer, and administrator. The team, comprised of respected nursing home professionals, included a clinical pharmacist, dietitian, nurses, and physicians. Together, they thoroughly reviewed the operations of the three State Veterans Homes at Barstow, Chula Vista, and Yountville and have arrived at the following conclusions and recommended changes.

That team has consistently identified the following:

- The new Homes at Barstow and Chula Vista were organized on a physician-driven acute care model that is not appropriate for the continuum of long-term care offered at these Homes, particularly in the nursing homes.

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- The Homes' senior management lacks nursing home-experienced nursing and long-term care leadership. The licensed Nursing Home Administrators (responsible for the operations of the licensed nursing home unit of the Homes) report to Home Administrators (responsible for the operation of the entire Home) who lack experience in nursing home operations, confusing leadership direction.
- These flawed elements of the current Homes model result in inappropriate care and difficulties in complying with California nursing home licensing requirements. For example, the Barstow nursing home unit was decertified from Medicare and MediCal participation in 2000, causing the loss of several million dollars of reimbursement while the Home attempted to regain full compliance with regulatory requirements.

The following changes to the Veterans Home Division and the three Homes will be implemented beginning on February 1, 2003:

- The current Deputy Secretary of the Homes Division will vacate that position to assume leadership of the planning and construction team that will manage development for the five new Veterans Homes approved by recent legislation.
- A nursing home operations professional has already been nominated to replace the current Deputy Secretary of the Homes Division.
- The current Skilled Nursing Home Administrators at both the Barstow and Chula Vista Homes will absorb the duties of the current Home Administrators, pending a search.
- Nursing Administrators with strong nursing home backgrounds will be recruited for any vacated positions, increasing the nursing operational emphasis and depth.
- For the first time, a licensed nursing home administrator will be appointed to head the nursing home unit at the Yountville Veterans Home.
- Physician services will be restructured at all Homes to better serve the needs of nursing home residents. Ongoing training in Geriatrics and long-term care will be emphasized.
- The Homes Division Headquarters will staff an aggressive quality management program with Quality Assurance Nurses, a Division Medical Officer, and other professionals. This team will set standards, measure results by regular surveys of the Homes, and train staff to achieve full licensing compliance and an improved quality of life and care for the Veteran residents.

Undersecretary Tom Kraus commented, "This has been a very long, tedious, and thorough review of the operations of the Veterans Homes. The recommendations offered by the team of experts, and now being implemented, will go a long way in resolving past issues at the Homes while improving future operations and care for the residents." Mr. Kraus added, "The results will take some time, but we are optimistic that we have the right structure and plan for correcting the historical problems at the Homes. Our goal is to make California's Veterans Homes the model for the nation."

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